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SUBJECT: RULER OF DUBAI UNVEILS NINE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

1.(U) Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai (MbR), unveiled a new nine-year Dubai Strategic Plan for 2007--2015 at a gathering of senior Emirati officials on February 3. The plan covers five sectors for development: economic; social; infrastructure, land, and environment; security, justice, and safety; and government excellence. The announcement was heavily covered in all local media, but with little variation in the story.

2.(U) The Plan calls for an ambitious 11 percent per annum rate of economic growth and a tripling of 2005's gross domestic product from AED 135.9 billion (USD 37 billion) to AED 396.6 billion (USD 108 billion) by 2015. This would, according to the plan, translate to a 41 percent increase in the per capita GDP for Dubai from USD 31,140 to USD 44,000 during the same period.

3.(U) The plan also calls for the creation of 882,000 new jobs, which will raise the employment figure for the emirate to 1.73 million. The government wants to shift employment to jobs requiring higher skills and also increase the number of Emirati nationals in the workplace. Economic diversification, with a focus on the services sector, is seen as the key to success in the employment sector of the plan.

4.(U) Other elements of the plan address maintaining cultural identity, improvements in security, healthcare, the standard of living and quality of life. To date, there is little detail available regarding these elements of the plan, although MbR did in his talk specifically address issues regarding the growing bane of most Dubaisians, traffic congestion. He noted that the coming Dubai Metro system and additional bridge lanes over the Dubai creek, now under construction, would not in themselves solve this growing problem and that additional, creative solutions would need to be found.

5.(SBU) MbR also announced that a broader UAE Strategic Plan will be made public soon, and that the Dubai Strategic Plan will be fully integrated into the UAE Strategic Plan. Additionally, the English language paper Emirates Today reported that "Sheikh Mohammed said he will soon take the all the cabinet members into the desert for two or three days to thrash out the UAE's overall strategies and plans for all-around future growth." A member of the MbR's Sheikh Mohammed inner circle today confirmed to us that this "retreat" is likely to take place February 13-14.

16. (SBU) Comment: We will continue to see additional details regarding the plan, which at this point seems to be more of a series of goals and concepts rather than a detailed operational way forward. We doubt we will see much more detail until some time after the upcoming Dubai senior "retreat", the first such event of its kind in our memory.

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